

Any Way the Wind Blows

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Any Way the Wind Blows

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Summary

Thanks to the work of Team Avatar the Four Nations have been at peace for years.
In the Fire Nation, Ambassador Katara of the Southern Water Tribe works alongside her husband Fire Lord Zuko.
In the Earth Kingdom, Sokka and Suki travel as diplomats.
At the Air Temples, Avatar Aang continues his training.
And Toph? She lets the wind carry her.
But the wind is...changing, the world is slipping out of balance again, and together the friends will have to work to defeat a rising evil.

Notes

Words by B (aka [zukos-calming-tea](#))
Art by Brit (aka [rllyaanrllly](#))

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

Road to Hell

He enjoyed watching their lives play out. The many *feelings* they experienced over the years. It never got old, seeing the fear, the anger, the sadness, the joy, the *love*.

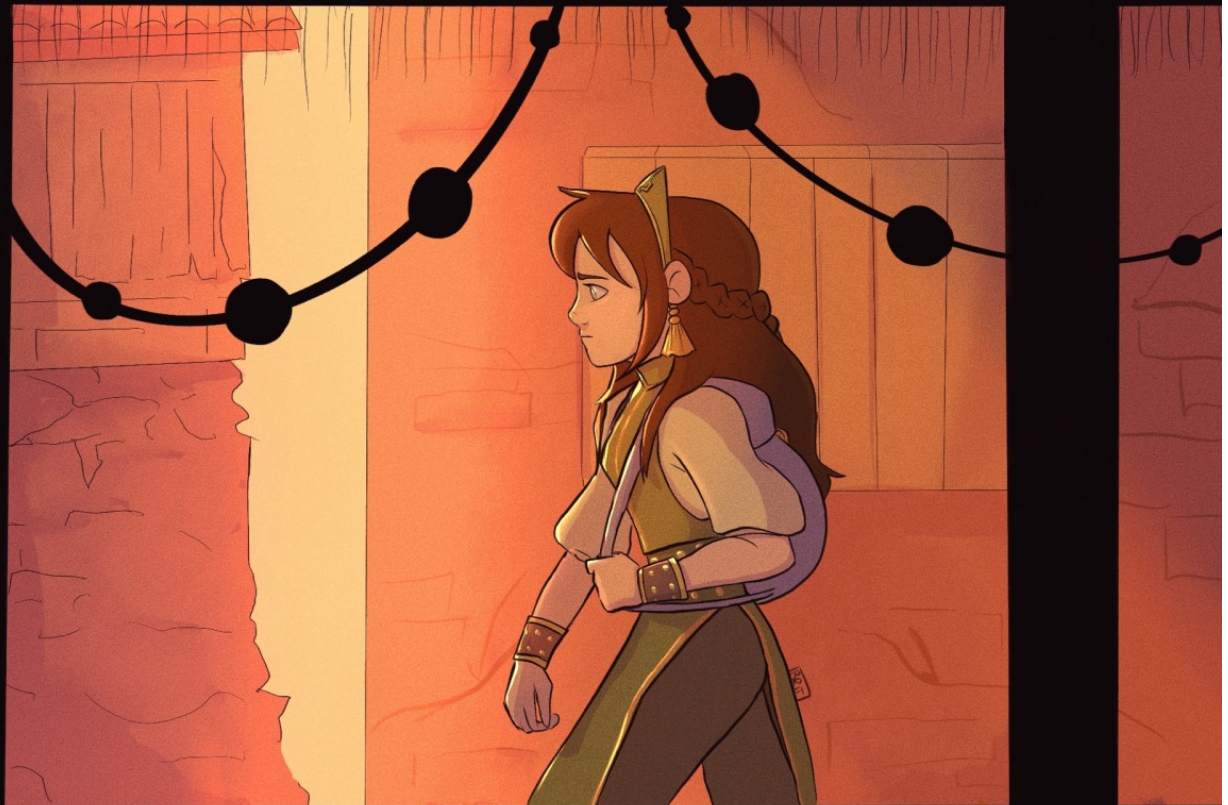
Love... It was his favorite by far, because it often encapsulated all the rest in one chaotic tangle. A proper feast. Love was the most powerful and --often times- the most vulnerable. An incredible thing to toy with.

Throughout many infinities he had watched, patiently, waiting for the perfect strings to pull that would unravel everything...

Until one day, the truly desperate wandered to him, and his game started with the careful planting of doubtful seeds. It was so easy to manipulate them --their *human* weaknesses made it so.

Under his guidance the limits were tested of just how far one would go for love... That was where it all began.

When it ended, the world would be his.



Any Way the Wind Blows

Another day, another town. The wind pushed at Toph's back, encouraging her: *one foot in front of the other, keep moving, keep going...*

In the years following the end of the war this had become her routine, to glide from place to place. She would stop every now and then to teach metalbending to fellow earthbenders, but she made a point of never staying long.

It was easier this way, to be alone... to not have to talk to anyone about what she had found when she had returned to the home she had fled from, seeking to make amends with her parents. The discovery had convinced her that her destiny was written in dirt roads, stranger's voices, and weary feet. *A runaway...* Why not? No roots meant no hurt.

She wasn't certain her friends would understand if she described this desire to them, to be unattached. Suki and Sokka were tied to each other, as were Fire Lord Zuko and his wife Ambassador Katara of the Southern Water Tribe, and Aang... Well, he was the only other one *not* paired up and she might've talked to him about her parents, but he had left when she needed him most --gone to attend to his Avatar duties. It wasn't like she could be mad at him for that. *Just disappointed...*

Aang was unaccustomed to the chatter filling his ears. After so much time spent in meditation, the voices of Suki and Sokka were somewhat overwhelming. Still, he smiled at Suki's easy laugh in response to a joke from Sokka. It really was nice to see them again. He wished the others had been able to join the reunion.

Katara had replied to his letter with enthusiasm, *'I am glad to hear your training went so well and I am excited to see you again. However... I will not be able to join you in the Earth Kingdom. I am needed here in the Fire Nation. Please, give my love to Suki and Sokka --and Toph, will she be joining?'*

Will she? Aang wondered, scratching Momo's ears absentmindedly as they continued on their way to the town's inn, deaf to the conversation that happened beside him. Toph had not replied to the letter he had sent to the Beifong household. In fact, Toph had not replied to any of his letters. It was only by the assurances of Zuko --who had received at least one message a month from the earthbender- that he hadn't flown straight there to check on her.

"Aang... Aang!"

"Sorry... What is it?"

Suki had dropped into a fighting stance, Sokka too. She pointed up the street to where a roof was being pulled off of a shop by a... *A spirit?*

The trio raced forward, Aang already unfolding his glider and preparing to take to the air, as the blue blur of the spirit recklessly tossed chunks of the building down to the ground. Now, the sound of townspeople screaming filled the air. A shiver ran down Aang's spine --it had been some time since he had heard the clamor of fear.

Aang landed on the roof while Suki and Sokka herded the alarmed witnesses away from the spirit. “Hi, spirit!” he called. “I’m the Avatar.... Uh, in case you’re lost, this is not the Spirit World. Can I help you find your way back?”

The spirit barely had any shape to it, likely because of a weak connection to the physical world, but Aang sensed that when it turned to face him it was with a dismissive glare. The spirit emphasized this by waving a long limb through the air and Aang blinked in disbelief as clouds covered the sky, accompanied by a frigid breeze. Snowflakes fell in thick clumps on what had been a clear and sunny day.

Aang had experienced his fair share of spirit chaos throughout the war, but this was decidedly out of the norm. He was about to step forward and try to communicate with the spirit again when a piece of earth appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, and collided directly with the blue form. A disgruntled humming sound emanated from it and it spun towards the attack.

Since it was distracted Aang reached out to touch the spirit, summoning all his knowledge of them to try and determine a way to speak with it. Instead, the airbender’s hand fell through thin air, the blue glow of the creature disappearing before his very eyes.

That was easy... Maybe too easy. As though the spirit had decided to leave simply to avoid dealing with being outnumbered... Aang walked to the edge of the broken rooftop and peered down to see which Earth Kingdom citizen had assisted him in attacking the spirit.

She looked older, but not significantly taller, and bore the familiar sly grin he had adored many times over.

“Funny what the wind drags in --how’s it going, Twinkle Toes?”

End Notes

A story months in the making...we hope you will enjoy this story told in the Avatar universe and inspired by the music of [Hedestown](#)!

Say hi to us in the comments or over on tumblr where we will also be posting this fic 😊

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